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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Judicial Council Approves Proposals to Encourage Law School Fairness Education**

San Francisco— The Judicial Council of California has approved a set of strategies for incorporating access and fairness into law school education that will be sent to law school deans throughout the state.

The strategies are contained in a new report issued by the council's Access and Fairness Advisory Committee, which conducted a focus group project in collaboration with the State Bar of California's Office of Legal Services, Access & Fairness Programs, and in cooperation with the deans of 17 California law schools.

The report is based on information gathered at focus groups conducted between 2003 and 2006 that explored how law schools address issues of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation fairness in the justice system and in the law school environment.

The report urges law school deans to consider various strategies that encourage enhancement of law school education and the development of effective and compassionate lawyers and jurists who serve California's diverse communities, including the following:

- Encourage faculty to educate students about the effects of racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, disability, and gender bias;
- Develop effective strategies that institutionalize fairness, diversity, and cultural competency training programs for law school faculty and staff;
- Institute written policies and procedures for students who request disability accommodations, including disability accommodations requested at the bar examination.
- Enhance information provided to students by career services and placement offices about public sector employment opportunities and encourage public interest and government

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organizations to recruit on law school campuses.

The Judicial Council also voted to send the report to the State Bar Board of Governors and the Law School Admissions Council. The full report, *Access and Fairness in California Law Schools*, is available at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/reports/022208item6.pdf](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/reports/022208item6.pdf).

## OTHER ACTIONS

In other actions at a public business meeting on Friday, the Judicial Council:

**Death Penalty Appeals.** Approved a proposal to amend the state Constitution to authorize the Supreme Court to transfer some capital appeals to the Courts of Appeal. Because of state budget constraints that would not permit the Legislature to provide additional resources to the appellate courts at this time, the Judicial Council voted to defer pursuing a legislative constitutional amendment to enact the proposal.

**Appellate Procedure.** With two changes, the council approved a recommendation by the Appellate Advisory Committee that the current rules relating to superior court appellate divisions be repealed and replaced with new rules, and that new forms for civil and criminal appeals and writ proceedings in the appellate divisions be adopted. The council modified the new rules to maintain the current 30-day period for filing a notice of appeal in limited civil and misdemeanor cases, rather than increasing this period to 60 days as had been recommended by the committee. The council also approved these new rules and forms to take effect on January 1, 2009, rather than July 1, 2008 as had been originally recommended by the committee.

**Mediation Week.** Approved a resolution that recognizes the third week in March as “Mediation Week,” to coincide with similar recognitions by the Governor and other public agencies. The goal of the week – to be observed March 17-23 this year – is to encourage courts to implement and improve mediation programs and to promote public awareness and use of such programs. Trial court projects this year will help enable self-represented litigants to participate in mediation.

**California On My Honor: Civics Institute for Teachers.** Recognized K-12 teachers participating in a professional development program that increases educator knowledge of the role and operations of the courts. Program participants were acknowledged by the Judicial Council for their important contributions to the field of civics education. In addition, the council acknowledged student volunteers in the JusticeCorps program for helping self-representing litigations gain access to courts.

*The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.*